

Little Hoover Commission Hearing 5/26/05  
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Governor's Office of Emergency Services

Introduction

The January 2002 Little Hoover Commission report titled "Be Prepared: Getting Ready for New and Uncertain Dangers" recognized "California's superior performance in responding to previous natural disasters." At that time it was stated, and I reiterate today, California's systems-approach, strength of resources and experiences makes it better prepared than any other state. Steps that the federal government is taking to adopt a systems approach across the nation are in fact a mirror of what we have in California. We also recognize the need for improvements is ongoing. We are now a state of 35 million with a diverse and ever-changing economy, landscape and population. We must reinforce our time-tested systems, yet look ahead toward innovative and adaptive solutions to meet the state's changing needs.

The Commission has asked a series of questions and this testimony will address those information needs as well as provide additional background on the status of emergency preparedness today.

Post 9/11 – Where we are today in emergency management

The 2002 report states that the terrorist attacks challenged existing preparedness models because of their scale, potential simultaneous events, and multiple threats. There is no doubt that the 9/11 attacks made us seriously review and consider our emergency preparedness programs. We learned from this review and are making adjustments to our emergency preparedness efforts and systems as a result. One thing we clearly learned was that our core systems, experience and capability for emergency response to all disasters, including terrorism, are sound. We have room for improvement to ensure we can carry out the public trust of not only responding effectively to all emergencies, but assisting in the recovery from and mitigation against future events. However, the same system we use for all aspects of emergency management every time there is a flood, earthquake, or wildfire, has proven its effectiveness. We are seriously considering the unique and frightening aspects of a terrorist attack, but we know in California our worst case disaster--in terms of human impacts--could very well be the next earthquake, tsunami, or wildfire.

To be clear, we understand the reality that no system is completely perfect. While we have strong emergency systems, we know that the largest scale disasters, such as a catastrophic earthquake in Southern California, could impact thousands of people and stress our ability to preserve life and safety and recover our economy. We learn and improve with every disaster and exercise experience, large and small. We have faced multiple disasters of different types occurring in our state simultaneously. Even though we have been fortunate not to have had the death toll experienced by New York, we have

had earthquakes that impacted entire regions of the state, and floods that impacted all California counties simultaneously. From each of these events and from 9/11 lessons we have made improvements. We have also sent responders to New York, Oklahoma City, the Florida hurricanes, and most recently to Southeast Asia for tsunami recovery, so we have very current and practical experience to incorporate into our preparedness efforts.

Because the next event--be it terrorism or an infectious disease outbreak--cannot be predicted with any true accuracy, we have learned that the best way to ensure our readiness is to develop sound and flexible systems. We adopted a systems approach after the Oakland Hills Fire in the early 1990's called SEMS, or the Standardized Emergency Management System. This system approach is tested in every new disaster, leaving no doubt we are on the right track. To highlight this, the federal government learned this lesson after 9/11, copied our system, and it is the heart of their efforts to prepare the nation for future catastrophic events. To just touch on the significance of this system and what it has accomplished, it makes available every resource of the state and local government and incorporates standardization of terminology, organization structure, and chain of command for every incident from the common traffic accident to the largest terrorism event.

A cornerstone of SEMS is the Master Mutual Aid Agreement, which allows the sharing of the above-mentioned resources between all political subdivisions in the state. We were the first to employ this back in 1950, and now other states are just developing a similar intra-state system. Under this umbrella agreement, discipline-specific agreements amongst the fire and law enforcement services address the need for a surge of resources during a disaster which would be beyond the capability of any community. For example, our Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid system ensures all firefighting resource in the state, local and federal governments, and even out of state resources, are managed and can respond to any event. The Blue Ribbon Fire Commission identified several areas of improvement, including issues such as access to military assets, personal protective equipment, use of new technologies and equipment replacement. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and partner agencies have made significant progress on many areas. For example, we are working closely with CDF, the Military Department and federal government to improve the process to access federal military assets, in particular aircraft. We have also equipped OES mutual aid fire engines with new foam and gel technologies for improved fire fighting. As resources become available, OES and CDF have supported creation of new Fire Safe Councils in the state to coordinate local fire prevention strategies.

In the medical/health arena, as the California Department of Health Services (DHS) and Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) will attest, we are committed to continue working to best integrate medical and public health issues into the emergency management system, particularly with post-9/11 awareness on bioterrorism issues. The public health component of emergency management system continues to be tested. We coordinate with DHS and EMSA on an annual hospital exercise to evaluate the preparedness of our statewide hospital and emergency medical community to address large casualty disasters. Last year in partnership with the Military Department and other

agencies, we participated in the Golden Guardian exercise. This was a full-scale drill that involved field response as well as activation of local and state emergency operations centers in response to several simulated terrorism events in the state and nation. Later this year, the Golden Guardian '05 exercise will mirror some of annual hospital drill elements by including a chemical exposure scenario. Further, reality has tested the system with everything from the SARS problems to West Nile Virus response.

And because of specific concerns raised by the terrorist threat, we are working with DHS and others on the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) planning which will provide an influx of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies if needed to respond. We are also working to improve surveillance systems, such as BioWatch and the US Postal Service BioHazard Detection System. Every day the medical/health system becomes more of an integral part of the overarching SEMS system.

By design, the California emergency response system addresses one of the fundamental questions asked by this Commission, "Who's in-charge?" SEMS provides a process to ensure that all responding agencies, including police, fire, public health and others, who are involved in a disaster have a clear understanding of who has responsibility for decisions. Disasters evolve and the command function many change many times during the course of events. Under California law, local governments have the primary responsibility for disaster response and recovery, unless they ask for supplemental state assistance. Even then, local government retains tactical responsibility in the field. In an event, such as an earthquake or terrorist bombing, a local fire department may be in-charge early on in removing people from the rubble and getting immediate medical care, while at the same time the police department is collecting evidence and working with law enforcement counterparts to control access to the scene and determine if there was criminal involvement. SEMS provides a means to manage this need for shifting responsibility.

This Commission has asked questions, as have others, about a federal government "take-over" of emergency operations during a terrorist event. After numerous disasters and exercises where the federal government has asserted such a position, and based upon ongoing discussions with federal officials, it is very likely that the federal government will take responsibility for the investigation that leads to the apprehension of the terrorists, but the local and state health officers will still be responsible for the community's health, fire departments will rescue the victims, and the local and state functions we use for every disaster will retain their respective roles. There is no doubt, to the extent they are available and not responding to terrorist events elsewhere in the country, federal agencies like Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Defense will be providing assistance every step of the way. The California system—and new federal system—allows for coordination among the multiple disciplines.

### Governance

System Maintenance – To develop SEMS in the 1990s, we created standards using a multi-agency, multi-level board. Under the direction of the Governor, I have re-

established that SEMS Advisory Board. It has membership of key state and federal agencies, including DHS and the California Highway Patrol (CHP). It also has local government representatives from throughout the state. The Board, and its various subcommittees, is responsible for ensuring that SEMS is refined and made current for any disaster we may face. The SEMS Advisory Board will be initially focusing on consistency between federal and state emergency response systems. Although the federal government has recently adopted our SEMS system for nationwide application, they, of course made some adjustments that we will need to address in California to ensure a seamless response from local through federal government levels in any emergency. To provide external review of the SEMS Advisory Board, the Governor as well as the Legislature will be appointing members to the Emergency Council. This statutory Council, with its variety of members, will ensure a dispassionate review of our system.

The Commission specifically asked about the future of the State Strategic Committee on Terrorism, or SSCOT. My office created that committee before the 9/11 attack as a mechanism to address terrorism-specific planning, and its functions were later enhanced by executive order after the terrorist attacks. We now have either addressed or have projects initiated to work on those terrorism specific preparedness issues raised by SSCOT, for example the multi-disciplinary intelligence fusion center which the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) will address. But, as I have stressed before, the fundamental systems and principles that will be key to any disaster response are the same systems we will employ for terrorism, earthquakes, or for an infectious disease outbreak. We will now be folding many of the SSCOT functions in the SEMS committees to ensure they are fully integrated into our broader emergency response system.

Administrative Leadership - OES took the lead in developing a Statewide Strategic Plan (currently on our website) that establishes an overall vision and outlines goals for all levels of government in the area of emergency management. Partners in this effort included all key state agency stakeholders, including OHS, DHS and the Military Department, as well as federal and local government. In fact, this effort just received the American Society for Public Administration's Intergovernmental Cooperation honor. This sets the framework from which other emergency management strategies will be built. To ensure that this strategy is implemented, OES is working with other key state and local agencies on plans that encompass the statewide goals. For example, OES is working with DHS on a plan for the deployment and distribution of the aforementioned Strategic National Stockpile.

This Commission raises questions about the impacts of budget reductions on OES and our capability. We have provided specific budget information to the Commission staff. OES was reduced by over 100 positions, or 20% of our staff, during the last two years of the Davis Administration. The cuts were taken as surgically as possible to minimize the effect on response capability, in particular our ability to support local emergency needs and coordinate state agency response. The reductions came primarily in support functions, in training, and in our recovery operations. We also have somewhat less depth now in our regional staff, but we have developed protocols to quickly shift staff from other regions and from Sacramento to support the regions, if necessary, during

a disaster. We have initiated a robust internal training program to ensure all staff are trained to an appropriate level to provide this support in disasters. Our desire is to extend this training to other state agencies in order to maximize those resources as well. Also, as some of our response equipment has become outdated, we are working to quickly replace critical equipment by using federal grant funds.

Future State Organization – The Commission raises the issue of how to best organize state government agencies and departments to ensure we can best prepare, react, and manage disasters. The Administration will be making a proposal on re-organization when the time is appropriate, and it will be based upon studied evaluation of the form government should take to best carry out its responsibility for public safety. California has demonstrated, probably more times than any other state, that the current organizational structure for emergency management works. Also, a multi-hazard approach to disaster preparedness is the only effective approach when building systems to manage the unknown. However, new and potentially more effective models must be explored, and we must learn from the experiences of other states. Even the federal government is currently reassessing its recent decisions to integrate the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) into the broader areas encompassed by homeland security.

Governor Schwarzenegger has strongly supported emergency management in California. Likewise, he has recognized that evolving issues of terrorist threats require special attention. OES will continue to be responsible for emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation for all types of disasters that may affect California. OHS has been given the large task of ensuring that the state has taken every measure possible to thwart potential terrorist attacks, and to ensure that the state's law enforcement community has the intelligence and support necessary to protect the public and critical infrastructure.

Until a formal organization change is appropriate, OES will continue with its overarching responsibilities and work closely with the OHS, the Military Department, DHS and all other agencies that have key roles in disasters.

### Capacity

The functionality of SEMS will no doubt be the key to our success in whatever the next disaster may be, but it is still critical that we have the capacity to project what resources are needed in a timely manner. We, like every governmental entity, are living within a smaller budget. So, we are focusing our efforts on areas where we know the public will get the most public safety return. And, of course, we are trying to leverage federal financial resources.

I would like to highlight some of those initiatives:

In coordination with First Lady Maria Shriver, we have launched a preparedness campaign that aims to provide Californians with the knowledge to prepare themselves

and their families for disasters. This campaign is also an example of how the private sector can get involved in emergency preparedness as several corporate sponsors have pledged their involvement.

The 9/11 Commission made the following statement :

“The ‘first’ first responders on 9/11, as in most catastrophes, were private-sector civilians. Because 85 percent of our nation’s critical infrastructure is controlled not by government but by the private sector, private sector civilians are likely to be the first responders in any future catastrophes.”

California businesses and their employees will often be the first to experience a terrorist attack or natural disaster. In New York, it was the coordination of private citizens alongside traditional first responders that saved 25,000 lives during 9/11. That type of collaboration needs to be fostered in California. We have joined with several corporations, and will be adding many more to our team, to ensure that they have a systematic way to participate in getting their employees and communities ready for disasters. Also, legislation has been introduced that would formalize this public/private system to support public safety.

In another initiative, we are proposing revisions to the state’s compact with other states to share resources during disasters. During the 9/11 terrorist attack and hundreds of natural disasters, our state has shared its resources with other states. We know that states cannot always rely solely upon their own resources, nor can we be assured that the appropriate federal resources will be available to assist California during a major disaster. Therefore, we will be working with the legislature to update our laws to facilitate the timely movement of emergency response resources between states.

Also, in another systems-related effort, we are establishing a process whereby lessons learned by local or state agencies from disaster and emergency drills are systematically reviewed and addressed. We are the only state that requires an After Action Report after every major disaster. We currently have a system to capture these lessons. And, over the years, as a practical matter we have addressed the major issues or gaps identified in each disaster; for example, coordination and integration of the National Guard to support to local law enforcement was addressed after the Los Angeles riots. We are now developing an automated system to track identified areas where our response capability needs to be improved. For example, the Blue Ribbon Commission, created after the 2003 Southern California wildfires, identified 48 recommendations for improvement of response to similar disasters. OES has made significant progress on many of the initiatives directed to the state, and we are identifying and seeking the resources needed to continue this progress.

### How to Measure Preparedness

This Commission has asked about standards and measurements for disaster preparedness. We have several major efforts in this area, for example:

California was the first state to standardize the common naming of emergency response resources. The common naming of emergency equipment is called resource typing. This has primarily been done in the fire and law enforcement services. California is partnering with other states and the federal government to create resource typing and tracking for all emergency response equipment from paramedic units to helicopters. This effort will lead to more efficient acquisition and movement of resources during disasters.

California was the first state to establish training standards for hazardous material emergency responders. We are now working, again with other California agencies and the federal government, to develop standards and certifications for all levels and all types of emergency response and recovery personnel. The fire service already has good start on this effort, but we are going to build upon that work and expand it to all disciplines.

### Communications and Interoperability

The need for enhanced interoperable communications systems has become a mantra for the emergency management community post 9/11. Everyone agrees it is important that communication systems used by first responders be able link to each other. California was one of the first states to develop dedicated radio communications systems to be used by fire and law enforcement to manage mutual aid during disasters. OES has been maintaining and improving this system for many years. My staff currently provides support for two key initiatives relating to interoperability.

The California Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee, or CALSIEC, is a federally mandated committee that is tasked with managing new radio frequencies for interoperable communications as designated by the Federal Communications Commission. We have used this committee as a platform to reassemble the committees that developed our existing mutual aid and interoperable communications systems. The committee is also responsible for developing a state-wide system of shared frequencies. Also under Federal mandate, two regional committees in the north and south are developing the local elements of the plan in coordination with the statewide effort.

The Public Safety Radio Strategic Planning Committee was chartered by the legislature to develop a plan for modernization of state-owned radio systems with interoperability as a goal, along with estimating costs and recommending funding strategies. Many state-owned systems are becoming both functionally and physically obsolete. This committee brings together the state agencies that operate significant public safety radio systems to identify common solutions.

In addition to these initiatives, we are also one of the only states that has developed a satellite communications system. This communications system, called OASIS, provides a dedicated and robust emergency communications between state and local government that isn't reliant on land-line communications. My office is currently using a homeland security grant to modernize and expand the data communications

capability of this system which will be essential in the next major earthquake or terrorist attack.

We are also enhancing interoperable communications at the tactical level. In response to the lessons learned in 9/11 several manufacturers have developed systems that link existing radio systems. With the support of the legislature, OES purchased three of those systems. They are available for use today in different modes both to support emergency operations when needed and to serve as test-beds for other jurisdictions considering investment in these systems. Several of the larger jurisdictions have used grant money to purchase these systems. Last year the Federal Department of Homeland Security sponsored a program known as RapidComm 9/30 to ensure that each of the 10 largest urban areas in the country had some means to create interoperable communications within an hour of a major event. Both California cities, Los Angeles and San Francisco, completed the project well ahead of schedule. The San Francisco solution uses one of the OES-owned "Black Boxes" in an OES communications van on loan to San Francisco Police Department until a more permanent solution can be procured.

Also, as an outgrowth of the Blue Ribbon recommendations, OES has worked closely with CDF in developing procurement plans for additional radios to expand the state's capability to respond to large scale wildland and urban interface fires safely. OES has also used its "Black Box" mounted in vehicles to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach to improving communications in wildland fire exercises in the San Diego area.

### Conclusion

The state continues to make progress in emergency management. Even before 9/11, we were preparing for terrorism, and from that tragic and devastating event we have learned even more. In the midst of this, California has experienced the Southern California fires, a significant earthquake, several destructive storms, an energy crisis and more. We are testing and exercising our systems and training our forces. We have completed a statewide strategy to define our common goals and priorities. We are documenting and adapting from our experience and lessons learned. Emergency preparedness is a continuous process to in theory plan for the worst, and in reality plan for the unknown. Our system—now the nation's system—is rooted in time-tested and reliable practices but must continue to evolve.

**OIFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
**STATE OPERATIONS BUDGET & POSITION INFORMATION**  
*Department and Regional Operations -- 10 Year Period*

Fiscal Year	Department			Regional Offices		
	Positions <u>1/</u>	GF Only <u>2/</u>	All State Ops <u>2/</u>	Positions <u>1/</u>	GF Only <u>2/</u>	All State Ops <u>2/</u>
04/05	472 <u>4/</u>	38,983	75,253	40.0	2,389	5,026
03/04 <u>3/</u>	459.0	36,854	68,650	46.0	2,238	5,220
02/03	527.0	31,911	55,928	59.0	2,914	5,897
01/02	522.0	35,386	58,850	59.0	2,898	5,958
00/01	547.0	30,649	53,974	61.0	3,121	6,655
99/00	548.0	38,371	61,427	62.0	3,446	6,503
98/99	559.0	30,029	53,329	61.0	2,768	5,828
97/98	797.0	29,849	63,566	61.0	2,953	5,822
96/97	881.0	28,091	77,756	62.0	2,961	6,415
95/96	627.0	33,471	60,644	63.0	2,938	5,138

1/ Regular Ongoing Positions, excludes salary savings and temporary help

2/ Budgeted amounts reflected in 1,000's

3/ On 1/1/04, the Office of Criminal Justice Planning programs and staff were transferred to OES. Fiscal breakout of 03/04:

OES	379.0	60,669
OCJP	80.0	7,981
	<u>459.0</u>	<u>68,650</u>

4/ Includes 13 positions budgeted for the Office of Homeland Security